



HEALTHY AGING: BETTER HEALTH, NOT JUST LONGER LIFE

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- There are currently over 33 million Americans aged 65 and older. By 2030, the number of adults age 65 and older will more than double to 70 million, or 1 of every 5 Americans.
- The unprecedented aging of the U.S. population has enormous implications for public health, the health care system, and the existing social services network. Increased emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion opportunities for older adults is one of the few avenues available to addressing the looming health care crisis, or what David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, recently called an impending fiscal “trainwreck.”
- Effective prevention measures exist today to substantially reduce illness, disability, and long-term care needs among older adults. However, these measures have not been widely applied.
- Critical public health strategies for older adults include: promoting healthy lifestyles; expanding the use of preventive services (e.g., cancer screening); expanding immunization against pneumonia and influenza; and ensuring homes and communities are designed and modified to reduce injury risk for older adults.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- Strengthened collaboration with the aging network (e.g., Administration on Aging) to determine gaps in the health-related needs of older adults, and needed scientific and programmatic expertise from CDC;
- Convened key experts in health and aging to identify measures to address critical gaps in data that would enable public health and aging professionals to better target health promotion and disease prevention efforts.
- Supported national organizations (e.g., American Society on Aging, National Council on the Aging) to promote healthy lifestyles, the broader use of preventive services, and injury prevention measures for older adults;
- Established the Prevention Research Centers Aging Network to determine current gaps in knowledge, accessibility, and feasibility of community-based prevention measures for older adults.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Aggressive outreach and fuller application of effective health-preserving strategies are critical to meeting the needs of a rapidly growing senior population. State and local health departments, the aging network, and organizations serving older adults are looking to CDC for scientific and programmatic expertise in strategies that reduce health- and long-term care needs and preserve quality of life. CDC is laying the foundation for a nationwide “Healthy Aging” program that will serve as a vital resource to states and communities for up-to-date information, training, technical assistance, and successful program models on promoting healthy lifestyles, increasing the use of clinical preventive services, and reducing injuries from falls and other causes.

For additional information on this and other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs.

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